DC #9

DIRECT CURRENTS

BOOKS SHIPPING OCT. 4 THRU OCT. 25

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INVASION!
3-issue mini-series

DOCTOR FATE
ongoing monthly series

BATMAN
portfolio

BLACK ORCHID
poster

PLUS . . .

An interview with Mike Zeck

Cover Of The Month
THE SPECTRE #22

THE *INVASION!* BEGINS

Earth is about to experience its darkest days at the hands of an alien alliance . . . and the start of the **INVASION!**

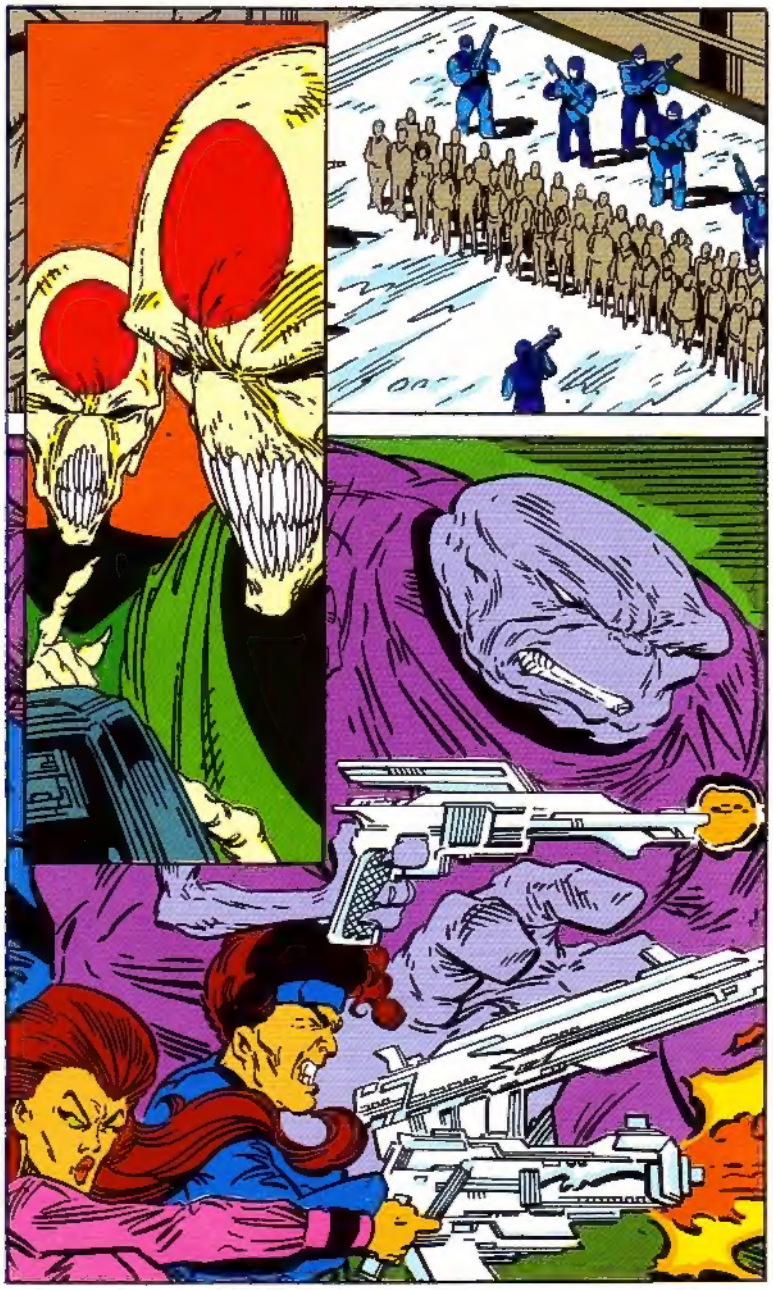
For years, alien civilizations have monitored our world, growing increasingly alarmed by the planet's abundance of paranormal beings, seeing a threat in the wealth of super-heroes spawned on Earth. The alliance's decision is to take control of the planet and its heroes.

And that calls for an INVASION!

From across the universe they come, prepared to take the planet and its heroes at any cost.

INVASION! is a three-issue mini-series, each issue in an 80-page format, written by Keith Giffen and Bill Mantlo, pencilled by Todd McFarlane, and inked by P. Craig Russell, Al Gordon, and Joe Rubinstein.

Though INVASION! can be read and enjoyed as a self-contained, three-issue series, it tells only a part of the story. The rest of the tale will be told over the next two months in DC titles across the line, chronicling the desperate and heroic struggle of Earth's super-heroes to turn back the tide of the INVASION. Some will succeed. Others will fail . . . and death will be the price they pay for the world's freedom.



THE WORKINGS OF *DOCTOR FATE*

Who is the *new* **DOCTOR FATE?**

You witnessed the death of the original DR. FATE and the birth of his new incarnation in last year's four issue mini-series . . . but many questions were left unanswered.

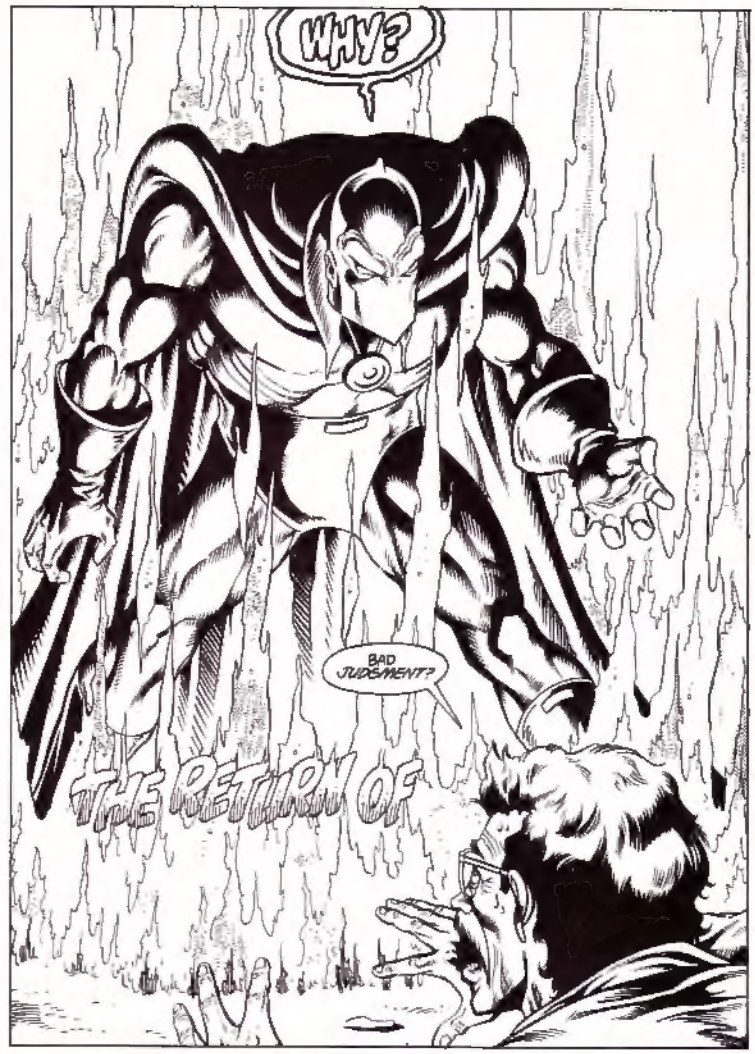
Until now.

Possessed by two separate, distinct personalities—that of a young boy and an older woman—DR. FATE must learn to cope with the conflicting feelings within his mystical persona. In addition, his household has run amok, pitting Fate against more than average domestic problems. They are situations he had best learn to deal with fast as the war between the Lords of Order and Lords of Chaos escalates, with Fate caught in the middle.

DOCTOR FATE is an ongoing monthly series in the New Format, written by J.M. DeMatteis (writer of last year's DR. FATE mini-series), and features the art of Shawn McManus, who also supplies the painted cover.

The magic is back . . . and it's in the hands of fate.

DR. FATE.



BATMAN PORTFOLIO

Nearly one year ago, the epic "Ten Nights of the Beast" mini-series-within-a-series from THE BATMAN #417–#420 created a splash—both for its storyline by Jim Starlin, Jim Aparo, and Mike DeCarlo and for the powerful cover art provided by Mike Zeck.

Now DC Comics has collected Zeck's covers and made them the centerpiece of the **BATMAN: TEN NIGHTS OF THE BEAST Portfolio.** This black-and-white portfolio features all four of Mike Zeck's breathtaking covers in full, original (10″ × 15″) size, along with two all-new companion illustrations commissioned especially for the portfolio and printed here for the first time.

These six black-and-white plates will thrill every BATMAN fan, whether the illustrations are kept in the unique three-color folder or framed.

The "Ten Nights of the Beast" are over.

But the excitement of the adventure continues in the BATMAN: TEN NIGHTS OF THE BEAST Portfolio.

Paul Kupperberg, Writer
Peggy May, Editor

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MEET *BLACK ORCHID*

Next month, you'll be able to read about the mysterious woman known as BLACK ORCHID in a three-book Prestige Format mini-series.

This month you'll get a special preview of what the BLACK ORCHID mini-series has to offer with the fabulous **BLACK ORCHID Poster**, painted in full-color by series artist Dave McKean.

But not only is the poster printed in full-color on heavy stock, it also features a startling and unique color effect from a special metallic ink that's used as a fifth color.

BLACK ORCHID. Beautiful. Mysterious. A heroine no one knows but everyone fears.

And the BLACK ORCHID Poster is only the beginning.

(Artist's sketch)

Hot Off the Movie Reel . . .
As we went to press with this issue of DIRECT CURRENTS, we were informed by 20th Century-Fox that ALIEN NATION, starring James Caan, Terence Stamp, and Mandy Patinkin has been re-scheduled. Rather than the summer release originally planned, the movie is scheduled to debut in October. Therefore, the DC Comics ALIEN NATION comic book adaptation will ship on October 18.

FROM • THE EDITOR

Lots of you wrote in to ask questions that had been addressed in the letters appearing in the last issue.* Just as we went to press with that issue, "Cool Canadian" of North York, Ontario, Canada, wrote in and ended his/her letter with this:

How late is too *late to send off a letter? For instance, let's say, hypothetically of course, I am writing DIRECT CURRENTS #6 a letter. How long after DIRECT CURRENTS #6 is printed must the letter arrive at 666 Fifth Avenue to have a chance of getting in print? P.S. Thank you, Peggy, for starting this column. It's the kind of thing I've always needed!*

(Well, I guess I didn't need to print the P.S. here, but it's been a rough week or two, and I wanted to, well, take a momentary lapse into back-patting.) Anyway, "Cool Canadian," I would have answered you personally as well as in the column, had you included your address. (Yes, folks, please be sure to include your name and address. If you ask me not to print that information in DIRECT CURRENTS, I will honor your wishes. But it's kind of impossible to write to you directly if you don't include an address.) Had your letter arrived just a few days earlier, it would have made it to my trusty little over-crowded desk in time for issue #8. But the mails being what they are, it's best to expect a three-issue time lapse. In other words, if you write in response to *this* DIRECT CURRENTS, it's a fairly safe bet that I will have your letter as I'm putting together issue #12.

Do keep those cards and letters coming. I read each one and answer each one, even if all I can do is say "hi" and thank you for writing.

And now *I* have something to say, not in answer to anyone's letter this month. Things are getting really hot over at DC Comics. Next month, there will be so many new and interesting projects to report on that we'll be expanding the number of pages in DIRECT CURRENTS. Yes, you heard it here first! DIRECT CURRENTS #10 will run an extra four pages. I'm looking forward to telling you all about . . . Well, if I told you now, that wouldn't leave much for next issue.

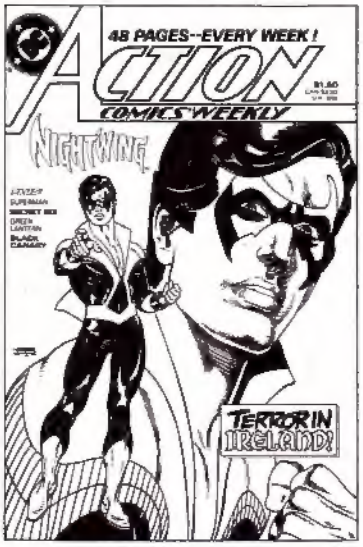
See ya,

Peggy

*See DIRECT CURRENTS #8 (Forgive me. I've always wanted to do that.)

BOOKS SHIPPING OCTOBER 4

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #627**
Gil Kane's rendition of Nightwing graces this week's cover while we serve up a double dose of Nightwing & Speedy action by Marv Wolfman and Cherie Wilkerson with art by Tom Mandrake; Green Lantern by Jim Owsley, Mark Bright, and Romeo Tanghal; Black Canary by Sharon Wright, Randy DuBurke, and Pablo Marcos; Superman by Roger Stern, Curt Swan, and Murphy Anderson; and the Secret Six by Martin Pasko, Frank Springer, and Frank McLaughlin.



ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #627

☐ **BATMAN: TEN NIGHTS OF THE BEAST Portfolio**
Mike Zeck's stunning cover art from the memorable "Ten Nights of the Beast" mini-series-within-a-series from THE BATMAN #417–#420 are only four of six black-and-white plates in this new portfolio, which also includes two all-new illustrations commissioned exclusively for the portfolio.

☐ **CAPTAIN ATOM #23**
The Ghost walks the Earth again . . . and the one thing on his mind is vengeance against his fanatical cult killers. And Captain Atom. Written by Cary Bates and Greg Weisman, with art and cover by Pat Broderick and Bob Smith.

☐ **COPS™ #6**
Big Boss may run the crime scene in Empire City, but Ms. Demeanor's decided she wants the job . . . and it's beginning to look as though not even the COPS are going to survive her fight for power. Written by Doug Moench, with art and cover by Pat Broderick and Pablo Marcos.

☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS #594**
The Batman usually works alone, but the threat of a mass murder in the Gotham City financial district forces him to team up with a bizarre private eye. Written by John Wagner and Alan Grant, with art and cover by Norm Breyfogle.

☐ **DOCTOR FATE #1**
The new Dr. Fate faces his first and greatest challenge as the dark forces gather to overrun the world with demons and devils. Written by J.M. DeMatteis, with art by Shawn McManus and Mark McKenna. Painted cover by McManus. *(New Format)*

☐ **THE NEW GUARDIANS #5**
Thomas Kalmaku's wife Tegra is kidnapped . . . by the government of South Africa, an act of political terrorism that the New Guardians don't take lying down. Written by Cary Bates, with art by Joe Staton and Mark Farmer. *(New Format)*

☐ **THE QUESTION #24**
The outcome of the Hub City elections rests on a single vote . . . and the results of the terrible tragedy that strikes the Question and friends. Written by Dennis O'Neil, with art by Denys Cowan and Malcolm Jones. Cover by Cowan and Bill Sienkiewicz. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format)*

☐ **THE SPECTRE #22**
Detective Jim Corrigan and his new operatives take a trip together . . . into the Sea of Darkness, courtesy of Zoran. Written by Doug Moench, with art and cover by Bart Sears and Mark Pennington. *(New Format)*

☐ **SUICIDE SQUAD #21**
The Squad is having a bad day as Black Orchid is reported among the missing . . . Senator Cray is desperate for their help . . . and Col. Flag has gone AWOL. Written by John Ostrander, with art and cover by Luke McDonnell and Karl Kesel.

☐ **THE WANDERERS #8**
Psyche travels back to her prime's homeworld to meet her folks, but their reception is anything but warm. In fact, it's downright deadly. Written by Doug Moench, with art and cover by Dave Hoover and Robert Campanella. *(New Format)*

☐ **WASTELAND #14**
Rick Magyar joins the team of regular Wasteland artists for another trio of typically terrifying tales taken from the twisted team of John Ostrander and Del Close. Joe Orlando and Bill Wray contribute their art, and Donald Simpson provides the cover. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format)*

BOOKS SHIPPING OCTOBER 11

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #628**
The Blackhawks return in an all-new story by Martin Pasko and Rich Burchett and stars on the cover by Curt Swan. Inside, the adventures of Green Lantern, Superman, Black Canary, The Secret Six, and Nightwing continue.

☐ **THE BEST OF THE BRAVE & BOLD #5**
(of a 6-issue mini-series)
The best of the historic Brave & Bold title continues with the Batman in his strangest team-up ever, the House of Mystery, in a story by Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams (from B&B #93). Also featured are the Viking Prince, by Joe Kubert (from B&B #14) and the Golden Gladiator and Robin Hood, both by Russ Heath (from B&B #4 and #14, respectively). Cover by José Luis García-López. Back cover by Andy Kubert. *(Deluxe Format)*

☐ **BLACK ORCHID Poster**
Next month, the three-book Prestige Format Black Orchid mini-series debuts . . . but you won't have to wait that long to see how this exciting new series will look. Not if you pick up the fabulous full-color Black Orchid Poster painted by series artist Dave McKean, featuring a startling metallic colored ink that gives this poster a unique and special effect.

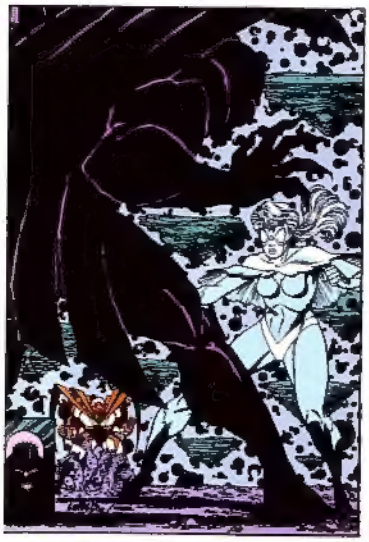
☐ **CHECKMATE #11**
When Earth becomes the target of the alien Invasion, the Knights of Checkmate are thrust into a plot by human sympathizers to assassinate the Queen of England. Written by Paul Kupperberg, with art by Steve Erwin and Al Vey. Cover by Gil Kane ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike. New Format.)***

☐ **DOC SAVAGE #4**
Doc must ally himself with his Russian counterpart to combat an enemy that has conspired since the dawn of time to destroy the hopes and aspirations of mankind. Written by Denny O'Neil, with art by Rod Whigham and Steve Montano. Cover by Adam and Andy Kubert. *(Deluxe Format)*

☐ **FIRESTORM #80**
The aliens have overrun the South Pacific and the only hope of stopping this extraterrestrial threat lies with the unusual super-team of Firestorm, Firehawk, Power Girl, and Starman. Story concludes in two weeks in STARMAN #5. Written by guest scripter Robert Greenberger, with art by Tom Grindberg and Sam De La Rosa. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

FLASH #21
Manhunter guest-stars as Flash, fresh off his night on the city streets as one of the country's homeless, heads to Cuba to do battle against the alien invaders who have landed there. Written by William Messner-Loebs, with art by Greg LaRocque and Larry Mahlstedt. Cover pencilled by LaRocque. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

HAWK & DOVE #5
(of a 5-issue mini-series)
The mini-series concludes with Hawk and Dove facing Kestrel for the final time . . . only this time, they do so as captives in his realm of Chaos. Also, Dove's origin revealed at last. Written by Barbara and Karl Kesel, with art and cover by Rob Leifeld and Karl Kesel.



HAWK & DOVE #5

INVASION! #1
(of a 3-issue mini-series)
Earth's wealth of super-heroes makes the planet a target for a confederacy of alien races threatened by our world's abundance of paranormal beings. The INVASION starts here, written by Keith Giffen and Bill Mantlo, pencilled by Tod McFarlane, and inked by P. Craig Russell, Al Gordon, and Joe Rubinstein.

JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL #22
The JLI's New York embassy is the target for a squadron of miniaturized alien killers, and the only member of the League who can possibly save the team is . . . Oberon? Written by Keith Giffen and J.M. DeMatteis, with art and cover by Kevin Maguire and Joe Rubinstein. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

MANHUNTER #8
Manhunter is hired to keep the headstrong Flash out of trouble while he confronts the alien invaders in Cuba. Written by John Ostrander and Kim Yale, pencilled by Doug Rice, and inked by Pablo Marcos. Cover by Rice. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

V FOR VENDETTA #6
(of a 10-issue mini-series)
Just whose side is V on, anyway? Evey is forced to ponder this question when she finds herself pursued by V and awakens in a hellish prison. Written by Alan Moore, with art and painted cover by David Lloyd. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format)*

WONDER WOMAN #25
The alien invasion strikes at Paradise Island as Diana teams up with Black Canary and the JLI to fight them off. Written by George Pérez, with art by new regular penciller Chris Marrinan and inker Will Blyberg. Cover by Pérez. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

YOUNG ALL-STARS #21
Albert Einstein becomes the target of a Nazi plot as Baron Blitzkrieg teams with Super-Samurai to grab the scientist . . . and face off against the All-Stars. Written by Roy Thomas and pencilled by Ron Harris. *(New Format)*

BOOKS SHIPPING OCTOBER 18

ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #629
The Secret Six star on this week's cover spot, by *Steve Canyon* penciller Dick Rockwell. Inside, Green Lantern, Superman, Black Canary, Blackhawk, and Nightwing continue their adventures.

THE BATMAN #428
"A Death in the Family" reaches its breathtaking climax as Batman—and we—learn if Robin has lived . . . or died at the hands of the Joker. Guest-starring Superman and Dick Grayson. Written by Jim Starlin, pencilled by Jim Aparo, inked by Mike DeCarlo, cover by Mike Mignola.

DEADSHOT #4
(of a 4-issue mini-series)
Deadshot's mother becomes his target after he learns that it was she who apparently masterminded the death of his son. A chilling, surprise conclusion to this mini-series, written by John Ostrander and Kim Yale, with art and cover by Luke McDonnell.

DRAGONLANCE #3
Dreams of evil sent by Lord Soth plague both Riva and Vandar. Will nightmares succeed where the draconians failed? Written by Dan Mishkin, with art by Ron Randall and Randy Elliott. Cover by Randall. *(New Format)*

GREEN ARROW #13
Someone's playing "Stalk the Archer" as Green Arrow returns to the streets of Seattle once again, only to find himself the prey in a deadly game of tag. Written by Mike Grell, with art and cover by Ed Hannigan and Dick Giordano. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format)*

HAYWIRE #5
Haywire faces two unpredictable foes—a Colombian drug cartel . . . and the New York City subway system. Written by Michael Fleisher and pencilled by Vince Giarrano. Cover by Giarrano. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.)*

HELLBLAZER #14
Constantine reconnects with his humanity as he looks for a new role to play in life. But can there ever be peace for this man? Written by Jamie Delano, with art by Richard Piers Rayner and Mark Buckingham. Painted cover by Dave McKean. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.)*

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #55
Been wondering what those missing Legionnaires have been up to during their absence? The answers are revealed here, in four stores spotlighting White Witch, Brainiac Five, Dream Girl, and Blok. Written by Paul Levitz, with art by Keith Giffen, José Luis Garcia-Lopéz, Ernie Colón, Erik Larsen, and Al Gordon. Cover by Steve Lightle. *(Deluxe Format)*

PLASTIC MAN #2
(of a 4-issue mini-series)
What's got six legs, icky powers even stranger than Plastic Man's, and causes more trouble than even Woozy Winks? That terrible trio, the Ooze Brothers, that's who. Written by Phil Foglio, with art and cover by Hilary Barta and John Nyberg, and an assist from Doug Rice.

PLASTIC MAN #2

THE PRISONER #3
(of a 4-book mini-series)
The new Number Six becomes a pawn in the deadly struggle for dominance being waged by the *original* Number Six and his old adversary, Number Two . . . a struggle both have waited 20 years to wage. Written by Dean Motter and Mark Askwith, with art and cover by Dean Motter, and coloring by David Hornung. *(Prestige Format)*

☐ **SECRET ORIGINS #35**
The three-part Secret Origins of the Justice League International concludes with the stories of the Martian Manhunter, by Mark Verheiden and Ken Steacy; Booster Gold, by Dan Jurgens; and Maxwell Lord, by Keith Giffen, Robert Loren Fleming, and Eduardo Barreto. Cover by Jerry Ordway and Ty Templeton.

☐ **SGT. ROCK SPECIAL #2**
Re-presenting the classic battle tale "Suicide Mission" from THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #52, this crossover adventure stars Sgt. Rock, Johnny Cloud, the Men of the Haunted Tank and a special appearance by Mlle. Marie. Also, "Cyrano's Army," by Len Wein and Walt Simonson, and "The Tally," an air war story from Kanigher and Alex Toth, originally presented in OUR ARMY AT WAR #254.

☐ **SUPERMAN #26**
Baron Sunday makes Superman a victim of his voodoo powers, leaving the Man of Steel on pins and needles . . . and Gangbuster left alone to defend Metropolis against the forces of the alien invasion. Written by Roger Stern, with art and cover by Kerry Gammill and Dennis Janke. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

SUPERMAN #26

☐ **TAILGUNNER JO #6**
(of a 6-issue mini-series)
With Jo's fantasy world lying in ruins and Gunner's mind now beyond her reach, Jo is left in solo control of the Cyborg as she fights her way through Heaven to confront . . . her father? Written by Peter Gillis, with art and cover by Tom Artis and Joe Rubinstein. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.)*

BOOKS SHIPPING OCTOBER 25

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #630**
John Severin brings us his rendition of Superman on the cover. Inside: the final installment of the Secret Six as Mockingbird's identity is revealed after 20 years of wondering. Also, Green Lantern, Superman, Black Canary, Blackhawk, and Nightwing.

☐ **ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN #449**
The aliens have landed and are demanding to speak with Superman . . . who is nowhere to be found. The Guardian goes off in search of the Man of Steel but finds instead the mysterious new Gangbuster. Written and pencilled by Jerry Ordway and inked by Dennis Janke. Cover by Ordway. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

☐ **ANIMAL MAN #6**
The advance alien invasion force strikes and Animal Man takes on a Thanagarian hawk-man who has planted an atom bomb at the San Andreas fault. Written by Grant Morrison, with art by Chas Truog and Doug Hazlewood. Cover by Brian Bolland. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike. New Format)***

☐ **COSMIC ODYSSEY #4**
(of a 4-book mini-series)
The planet Xanshi has been obliterated, leaving Green Lantern John Stewart suicidal over his role in its destruction . . . while The Batman and Bug go into battle against the mysterious Anti-Life Aspect to prevent Earth from sharing Xanshi's fate. Written by Jim Starlin, with art by Mike Mignola and Carlos Garzon. Cover by Mignola. *(Prestige Format)*

☐ **THE DOOM PATROL #17**
The Doom Patrol strike up an alliance with their alien foe Garguax as they go up against the forces of the alien invasion beneath the Arctic icecap. Guest-stars Aquaman, Aqualad, and the Sea Devils. Written by Paul Kupperberg, with art by Graham Nolan and Timothy Dzon. Cover by Nolan. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***

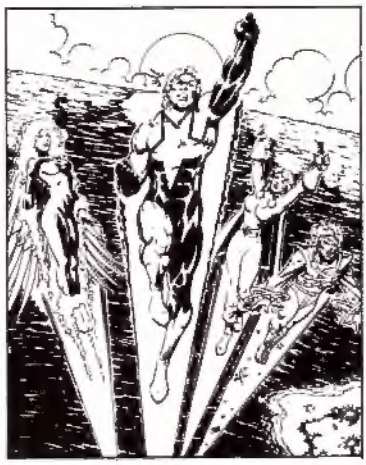
☐ **FLASH GORDON #8**
(of a 9-issue mini-series)
The battle everyone's been waiting for—Ming the Merciless versus Flash Gordon . . . with the fate of both Mongo and Earth hanging in the balance. Written and pencilled by Dan Jurgens and inked by Bruce Patterson. Cover by Jurgens and Patterson. *(New Format)*

☐ **THE NEW TITANS #52**
Part Three of "Who is Wonder Girl?" as Wonder Girl finally gets a chance to discover her roots as she returns to the place where she was trained. Written by Marv Wolfman, pencilled by George Pérez, and inked by Bob McLeod. Cover by Pérez. *(Deluxe Format)*

☐ **THE POWER OF THE ATOM #7**
The invading alien armada causes the Atom to go under cover, as he attempts to sabotage their plans. *Prowler* artist Graham Nolan debuts as the new penciller. Written by Roger Stern and inked by K.S. Wilson.

☐ **THE SHADOW #19**
His operatives have been trying to make a go of it alone for months, carrying on in the Shadow's tradition, but now things have gotten even stranger as the Shadow returns to them . . . whether they like it or not. The epic conclusion of "Body and Soul." Written by Andrew Helfer, with art and cover by Kyle Baker. *(Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format.)*

☐ **STARMAN #5**
Continued from FIRESTORM #80. Starman, Firestorm, Firehawk, and Power Girl face Khundish warriors of the alien invasion fleet in the South Pacific, their target . . . Adam Strange. Written by Roger Stern, with art by Tom Lyle and Bob Smith. Cover by Lyle. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike)***



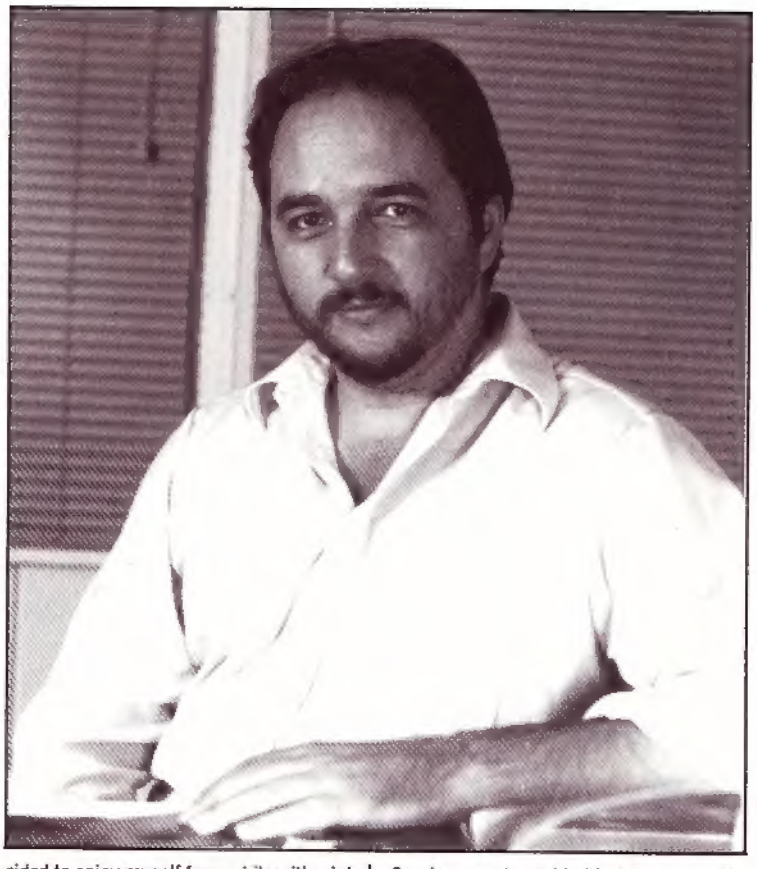
STARMAN #5

☐ **SWAMP THING #81**
Swamp Thing disappears, leaving Abby alone and pregnant in the swamp . . . and facing forces from the alien invasion. Written and pencilled by Rick Veitch and inked by Alfredo Alcala. Cover by Veitch and Tom Yeates. ***(INVASION! Extra: First Strike. Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.)***

☐ **THE UNKNOWN SOLIDER #2**
(of a 12-issue maxi-series)
The Soldier is assigned to escort an Iranian military officer out of Teheran as the Shah's regime crumbles about them . . . and ends up the target of Savak as well as the new radical Revolutionary Guard. Plus: part two of the Soldier's origin and the secret of his immortality. Written by Jim Owsley and pencilled by Phil Gascoine. *(New Format)*

people at WORK

Mike Zeck



Mike Zeck may be a relatively new name to fans of DC Comics, but he's been a major talent in comic book art for over a decade now. All you had to do was know at which company to look for his work. Fortunately, these days, you don't have to look much farther than DC.

Mike was born September 6, 1949 in Greenville, Pennsylvania and was raised in Fort Lauderdale after his family moved there when he was five. "I started out reading comics as far back as I can remember," Mike says. "I can remember having comics around even pre-school, when I was four, five years old.

"Back then I read a lot of Westerns. Hopalong Cassidy. Roy Rogers. We're talking the early fifties here, when DC was publishing a lot of that sort of stuff, before Marvel existed."

Super-heroes came along in Mike's life a little later. "My earliest memories of super-hero comics are of SUPERMAN and BATMAN, but even at that age I was looking at the artwork. My interests tended toward SUPERMAN by Curt Swan, Gil Kane's work on GREEN LANTERN and ATOM, Carmine Infantino on ADAM STRANGE and the FLASH. And I liked any war story by Joe Kubert. Those were the guys I was looking at, the guys who were really blowing me away with their art."

As you might have gathered from the above, Mike's interest in comics grew with his interest in art. Mike says, "I always knew I wanted to be an artist. Even at an early age I had it in my head that comic book artists were the best artists in the world because they had to be able to draw anything. A fashion illustrator only had to be able to draw bodies with clothes on them, but a comic book illustrator had to be able to draw anything in the world. I was amazed by these people and knew if I could do that, I would have reached the pinnacle of art, so that's what I worked toward.

"All through high school I never gave up going out and buying comics and wanting to get into the business. When it came time for college I picked an art school. I wasn't so much interested in the academic courses, just what they could teach me about art."

Mike's college of choice was Ringling College in Sarasota, Florida. "Of course," he points out, "there was no such thing as courses specializing in comics then, but I was fortunate to connect with a teacher, Harry Habblitz, who also had an interest in comics and fantasy art. He was there to encourage me toward my goal where others wouldn't have. In fact, he's still there and he has students who are interested in comics get in touch with me."

After graduation, Mike didn't immediately pursue a career in comics. "After living at the poverty level at school, I decided to enjoy myself for a while with a job with the Fort Lauderdale school board's media department. It was the type of job that wasn't going to be my end-all, and as that became more apparent, I decided to get serious.

"I did samples and got them off to all the comics companies. All of them were fairly interested but it wasn't the boom market we have now, so I had to wait until some titles were added to their schedules and there was a need for new artists.

"After a few months, Charlton Comics called. I had already sold some spot illustrations to Marvel Comics for their black-and-white magazines, but during 1974-75, the bulk of my work was for Charlton's horror titles."

Around the end of 1976, however, Charlton ceased publishing comics. "That's when I decided that if I was going to really get into this thing, I had better be living closer to where the comics publishers were, so I moved up to Connecticut in 1977.

"Since I had something of an in with Marvel, I went up there first. By this time I'd already done a few fill-in issues for *Master of Kung-Fu*, and shortly after that, I became the book's regular artist. That lasted for about three years, followed by another three-year run on *Captain America*, and then a year on *Secret Wars*.

"That was seven years of doing regular monthly titles," Mike says. "Since then I've stepped back a bit and decided to concentrate on mini-series and special projects. I wanted to be able to slow down a bit and be able to do a wider range of subjects."

Which brings us to Mike's work at DC Comics, most notably his four covers for last year's "Ten Nights of the Beast" mini-series-within-a-series for The Batman. "Superman and Batman are the cornerstones of comics and I knew eventually I had to do something with those guys, even if it was just covers or a few pages," Mike says. "I don't think there's anybody in comics who doesn't want to do something with them. It wouldn't be a total career without it."

When asked about his influences for the Batman covers (which appear in a special black-and-white portfolio, along with two brand-new plates created especially for the portfolio), Mike said, "I don't know if I have a particular influence in terms of illustrating Batman, but I really started getting into Batman when a lot of other people did, when Neal Adams started doing the stories. There have been a fair amount of artists whose renditions I really like, though. Brian Bolland has been one of my favorites for a long time, and his work on THE KILLING JOKE is going to be a hard one to top in my mind."

And what does the future hold for Mike Zeck at DC?

"Well, as soon as my work load eases up a bit, I'm considering doing a book featuring a new character, but it's really too early to talk about that. In the meantime, though, I'll be doing the odd cover here and there, as well as a pin-up for the upcoming 50th anniversary of Batman."

When asked how he feels about working for DC, Mike laughed. "It's given me the chance to toy a bit with some of the characters I was fond of when I was a kid, before there really was a Marvel. I guess I've kind of come around full circle that way."

Dr. Fate™

From the archives of the DC Comics Library, we bring you the cover of SHOWCASE #55 (1965), with Dr. Fate on the cover.